

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ADDIS 12006 041618Z

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ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 IO-14 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-11 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03

SS-20 USIA-15 CU-05 AID-05 PC-04 DRC-01 (ISO) W

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P R 041555Z OCT 74

FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1372

INFO AMCONSUL ASMARA

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USUN NEW YORK 1613

USCINCEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L ADDIS ABABA 12006

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS PINT ET

SUBJ: AFCC CRISES LEADS TO TALKS AND TROOP MOVEMENTS

REF: (A) ADDIS 11938 AND PREVIOUS;

(B) USDAO 656 OCT 74

1. WE UNDERSTAND THAT AFCC, JOINED BY ELEMENTS OF REGIONAL AFCC SUB-COMMITTEES, NOW IN ITS SECOND DAY OF MEETINGS AS SORT OF GRAND COUNCIL IN AN ATTEMPT FIND COMPROMISE PLANKS ON WHICH MILITARY UNITY CAN BE RE-ESTABLISHED. MEETINGS SAID HAVE BEGUN FOLLOWING INCIDENTS ALLEGEDLY INSTIGATED BY CONGOLESE VETERANS NIGHT OCT. 1-2. INCIDENTS, OF WHICH WE KNOW VERY LITTLE, SAID HAVE BEEN SUFFICIENTLY SERIOUS TO INDUCE MILITARY MAKE EXTRA-ORDINARY EFFORT BRIDGE DIFFERENCES DESCRIBED IN OUR RECENT TELEGRAMS. WE HOPE TO HAVE SOME INFORMATION SOON ON THRUST -- IF IT DEVELOPS -- OF DISCUSSIONS IN GRAND COUNCIL WHICH THUS FAR SEEM INCONCLUSIVE.

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 ADDIS 12006 041618Z

2. MEANWHILE, EMBASSY BEGINNING TO RECEIVE INDICATIONS OF TROOP MOVEMENTS AND MILITARY PREPARATIONS WHICH CURRENTLY IN COURSE. IT THUS CONFIRMED THAT 1ST DIVISION (BODYGUARD) STRENGTHENING ITS PREPAREDNESS POSTURE AND THAT 8MM MORTAR AND 105MM ARTY AMMO BEING MOVED OUT OF ENTOTO DEPOSITORY REPORTEDLY TO FORMER BG HQ OPPOSITE HSIU. THIS HIGHLY UNUSUAL. TROOPS ALSO MOVING INTO CITY FROM SOUTH. WE KNOW OF ARRIVAL SIX 2-1/2-TON TRUCKS LOADED WITH SOLDIERS AND HEAR THAT ANOTHER TWELVE ARE ON THE ROAD. WE HAVE NOT YET IDENTIFIED UNITS INVOLVED AND, THEREFORE, DO NOT YET KNOW WHETHER THEY ARE AIRBORNE OR 4TH DIVISION ELEMENTS. FRENCH COLLEAGUES HAVE CONFIRMED THAT 15 TO 20 ARMORED VEHICLES (UNSPECIFIED) WITH CREWS LOADED ON FRANCO-ETHIOPIAN RAILWAY AT DIRE DAWA AND NOW PRESUMED RPT PRESUMED ENROUTE TO ADDIS. THESE COULD BE 3RD DIVISION FORCES BUT WE DO NOT YET KNOW WHICH ONES. THERE ALSO INDICATIONS, BUT NOTHING MORE, THAT 15TH BATTALION OF 1ST DIVISION PREPARING TO MOVE FROM DEBRA MARKOS AND THAT 4TH DIVISION BATTALION MAY RPT MAY BE MOVING TO ADDIS FROM FICHE.

3. CONCLUSIONS ARE PREMATURE. WE INCLINE TO BELIEVE THAT TROOP MOVEMENTS ARE RELATED TO GRAND COUNCIL DISCUSSIONS. ADDRESSEES WILL WISH BEAR IN MIND THAT MAJOR UNITS NOT ONLY SPLIT VERTICALLY BUT HORIZONTALLY AS WELL, THAT LINES OF CLEAVAGE KEEP SHIFTING WITH PRINCIPALS PERCEPTIONS' OF SITUATION AND THAT IT IS THEREFORE UNLIKELY WE WILL GET DIFINITIVE INFORMATION ON HOW UNITS AND ELEMENTS OF UNITS ARE LINING UP. GROSSO MOD, HOWEVER, WE WOULD SPECULATE THAT DISSIDENT ELEMENTS OF POWERFUL BODYGUARD SEEM TO BE PREPARING FOR POSSIBLE CONFRONTATION WITH LOCALLY WEAK 4TH DIVISION, WHICH LIKELY CALLING ON 3RD DIVISION ELEMENTS FROM THE EAST FOR SUPPORT.

4. ALTHOUGH 4TH DIVISION IS LARGELY PAPER OUTFIT IN ADDIS IN THAT IT IS UNDER-MANNED, IT DOES HAVE SEVERAL ACES UP ITS SLEEVE IN POLITICAL-MILITARY DEALING NOW IN COURSE. ITS ACES ARE THE HOSTAGES CURRENTLY DETAINED AT 4TH DIVISION HQ (WHICH NOW, ACCORDING TO AUTHORITATIVE SOURCES, INCLUDE ARRESTED LABOR LEADERS BEYENE SOLOMON AND FISSEHA TSION TAKIE) AS WELL AS EX-EMPEROR HIMSELF.

5. IF ETHIOPIANS FOLLOW PATTERN WE HAVE SEEN EMERGING TIME AND
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 ADDIS 12006 041618Z

TIME AGAIN DURING LAST SEVEN MONTHS, THEY WILL FIND COMPROMISE OF SORTS WELL BEFORE CONFRONTATION LIKELY TO OCCUR HAVING SAID THIS, HOWEVER, CONVERGENCE OF DISPARATE MILITARY ELEMENTS ON CAPITAL CITY -- IF IT EVENTUATES -- CAN ONLY INCREASE TENSION AND DANGER THAT SITUATION MAY GET OUT OF HAND.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: TROOP DEPLOYMENT, MILITARY GOVERNMENT
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 04 OCT 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: CollinP0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974ADDIS12006
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740281-1013
From: ADDIS ABABA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19741074/aaaackvx.tel
Line Count: 113
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: (A) ADDIS 11938 AND PREVIOUS;
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: CollinP0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 29 APR 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <29 APR 2002 by elyme>; APPROVED <11 MAR 2003 by CollinP0>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: AFCC CRISES LEADS TO TALKS AND TROOP MOVEMENTS
TAGS: PINS, PINT, ET, AFCC
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005